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29<sup>th</sup> of Sam<sup>r</sup> Aug<sup>r</sup> 1732

*The Reasonableness, and Excellency of Abraham's Faith in Offering up His Son.*

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A  
**SERMON**  
Preach'd before the  
**UNIVERSITY**  
OF  
**OXFORD,**  
At St. *MARY's*.  
ON  
SUNDAY, *Decemb. 10. 1732.*

To which are added some Remarks  
upon Mr. *Chubb's* Case of *Abraham*.

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of *Wadham College*.

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## HEBREWS XI. 17.

*By Faith Abraham when He was  
try'd offer'd up Isaac.*



HE Design of the Author in this Chapter was to set forth to the *Hebres* the Excellency of Faith, and for this End He exhibits to them the Examples of the Patriarchs and Prophets, shews that 'twas this, which gain'd them Favour in the Sight of God, and was the Principle of those Heroick Deeds recorded in their Histories both sacred and prophane: By collecting the most remarkable Instances, and summing up the chief Evidences of Antiquity, he endeavours to excite a laudable Emulation in the Jewish Profelytes, and quicken them to as lively a Faith in *Jesus Christ*: Now as the Christian Religion requires only a well grounded and rational Belief, the Apostle to be consistent with himself, must suppose the Faith of these Persons whose Example he propounds to the Christians, to be built upon the same Rational Foundation.

The Faith of *Abraham* in Offering up his Son having been objected to, for its Difficulty to be

reconciled with Reason, and by some charged as inconsistent with it; it shall be the Subject of my present Discourse to vindicate the Force of the Author's Argument in this particular, by endeavouring to prove the Reasonableness of the Patriarchs Obedience to the Divine Command; in order to this I shall shew,

I. That God hath Power, and may have Reason to take away the Life of any of His Creatures.

II. That God hath Power, and may have Reason to make the Father His Instrument in taking away the Life of the Son.

III. That as far as we can judge from the Spir'd History, *Abraham* had all reasonable Assurance that the Command to offer up his Son was Divine.

I. That God hath Power, and may have Reason to take away the Life of any of His Creatures.

The Power of the Deity over the Lives of His Creatures is so manifest, that it hardly needs a Proof: As He is the Author and Governour of the Universe, this is his Divine Prerogative; *in His Hand must be the Soul of every living thing, and the Breath of all Mankind.* Job, 12. 10. Farther since Man from the Condition of his Creation is subject not only to God's General Laws, but likewise to His Particular Dispensations; since All are made liable to perish by Accidents, Diseases,

Diseases, and Time; 'tis plain the Deity had Motives to incline Him to exert this Power: and if His General Providence may be answer'd in the Death of His Creatures, may not some Ends of His Particular Providence be persw'd by the same Means: The Vindication of His Authority, the curbing the Exorbitancy of Sin, the General Welfare of Mankind, or the Particular Good of him, whose State is changed, may reasonably be supposed just Motives to take away Life: And we have the Testimony of Experience to confirm it; for Men generally Acknowledge that God hath frequently made the Ordinary Course of His Providence submit to His Extraordinary Interpositions, that He hath sent the Ministers of His Terrors to teach the *Inhabitants of the Earth Righteousness*, and to witness that the Lives of His Creatures are at His Will and Disposal: And since our Resignation to his Will is the Condition of our Creation, His requiring the Life He gave can be no Infringement of our natural Privileges. This can be doing us no Injury, neither can we claim any Recompence for the Loss thereof. But as I shall be oblig'd to enlarge upon this under my next Head, I proceed to shew that God hath Power, and may have Reason to make the Father His Instrument in taking away the Life of the Son.

The Laws of Nature when rightly understood must be allow'd immutable and eternal; for the same Circumstances cannot but form the same Relations. But then we are to understand that these Relations depend only upon their Circumstances,

stances, and that when they cease, the Relation it self, or the actual Obligation, that rises from them, ceases with them ; and this is not from any Defect in the Law it self, but from the mere absense of its proper Circumstances, wherein alone it becomes obligatory : and because these Circumstances do not always exist, the real Existance of a Law is mutable, though its Essence is invariable. Again — the Identity of Circumstances depends not on the Identity of Persons ; for different Laws may successively oblige the same Person, and in a Relative Sense they may be stiled new Laws, though absolutely, or in their own Nature, no Time or Age can be ascrib'd to them : for Instance, should two Persons stand at first in no other Relation to each other but that of Fellow Creatures, or Contemperary Members of the General Community of Mankind : should these enter into the same Religious or Civil Society ; a new Relation is superadded to the old ; and if One be promoted to any Dignity, or Office in that Society, and the Other placed in a subordinate Degree to him, again there commences a new Relation ; and supposing from the Instability of human Affairs, these Persons should change Places, and the Superior become Inferior, then the prior Obligation ceases to the same Person, the Duties of Obedience and Condescension shift their Subjects, and alternately oblige each Person : thus 'tis evident that though the Laws of Nature are in themselves immutable, their external Existence in their Circumstances is variable ; and that various Laws

Laws may oblige the same Person, and the same Laws without respect of Persons may change their Subjects.

The Relation of a Parent to his Child, consider'd only as such, indisputably obliges him to provide for, and promote his Welfare; but yet there may arise Circumstances, wherein this Obligation ceases, or is superseded by another: should the Son rise against his Father, and make any Attempts upon his Life, in this Case, Paternal Affection gives Place to Self-Preservation; and this Law will justify the Destruction of Life even by him, whose Duty it was before to preserve it: or should this Son endanger the Life of his Brother, the Father may there, if Occasion be, repel Force by Force even unto Death. As the Ties of Humanity, Love, or Charity are suspended, when they interfere with Self-Preservation, because their Circumstances, which before made Protection a Duty, are now wanting, and others are risen which give new Rules of Action; so likewise the Duty to the Son vanisheth, when 'tis made incompatible with the Father's Security: hence the Relation of a Father to his Son varies according to the Circumstances they are in, with Respect to each other; and though most may oblige him to take Care of, and cherish his Life, some may oblige him to destroy it; therefore Paternity it self doth not always, and absolutely prohibit this. Whether there may be Circumstances which may render it consistent with Infinite Power, and Goodness to give this Command, or whether the Father

ther, under such a Circumstance, may take away the Life of the Son comes next to be consider'd.

Reason, and the Practice of all Nations concur to assure us, that the Supreme Magistrate in every Civil Society hath Power over the Lives of those who sensibly disturb the Common-weal. If a Son Rebel against the Government, and fall by the Hands of his Father in the Field, surely it cannot be said that the Father is guilty of the Sons Blood: since the Judicial and Military Power spring from the same Fountain; should the Son be condemn'd for any Capital Crime, the Chief Magistrate must have Power to commission the Father to execute his Sentence upon the Son. Let it be observ'd that I am at present only pleading for the Power of the Magistrate over the Father; and that He hath this Power is evident, because, when the Safety of the Whole is concern'd, 'tis reasonable to infer, that He, to Whom the Power of Self-Preservation in every Member is in part delegated, hath Authority to command this for the Defence of the Whole, when each Member out of that Society could have executed the same in the Defence of himself: and 'tis absur'd to imagine that the Parent cannot be appointed to do that for the Preservation of the Society, and of himself in that Society, what he might justly and fairly do, for the Security of himself alone: Since Nature hath authoriz'd every One to act for his own Welfare, and protect himself from Injuries by whomsoever offer'd; and since the Power of every Community is but a large Collection

lection of the same Powers, 'tis natural to conclude, that whatever any Person could do in his original state, may be enjoined him when incorporated into Society: and I think it is evident, that every Community hath Power to oblige any Member to promote, as much as in him lies, its Welfare and Security.

Now as God is Supreme Governour of the Universe, the Fountain of Power and Dominion, and to Whom all Thrones and Principalities bow; as His Providence is no less infinite than his Power, and in His Royal Care He superintendeth the General Good; He may Establish whatever Decrees, He shall judge proper for this End; and as we are born His Subjects, are daily supported by His Goodness, and intimately feel the benign Influences of his Glorious Administration; the Tribute of our Fealty must consist in a cheerful Obedience to His Laws: should then the Lives of any of His servants interfere with the Publick Good; or should the Translation of any Subject from one Part of His Dominions to another tend to promote the Good, or Order of this Great Common Weal; He must have full Power to commission whom He pleases to execute this His Will. As the Interest of every Particular is included in the General Good, common sense assures us, that He who lodged in us the Power of acting for our own Preservation, whether Singly, or in Concert, can also continue the same Power, when His Infinite Wisdom shall direct it: neither can we doubt whether God regardeth this General

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Good in His particular Revelations: for what can we conceive more noble, or more worthy of an Infinitely Just, and All-powerful Being, than to suppose Him exercising His Authority, communicating His Will, and suiting His Laws to the Universal Good? As He hath link'd our Interests together, and ordain'd each private Welfare to Sympathize with the Publick Good; what's more consistent with His Attributes, than to suppose Him still acting in the same uniform Manner, and making His particular Dispensations subservient to his General Providence?

Thus far have I presum'd from its Resemblance with Human, to delineate the Divine Authority: but since the Power of Man is but an obscure Image, and a faint Representation of This most Perfect and Divine Original; it may serve better to illustrate Both, if we point out their Difference.

Human Magistrates must frequently Judge from Probabilities, and Act upon violent Suspicions, or circumstantial Proofs: and 'tis acknowledged that their Subjects may receive, and execute the Result of such Judgments.

But all Things are naked, and open to Him, Who ruleth over all; He perfectly comprehends all the proper Measures, that relate to the General OEconomy; His Judgments are founded upon Infinite Wisdom, and consequently His Authority must be commensurate to His Knowledge.

As Words and Actions alone fall under Human Cognizance; that Authority can be extended no farther.

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But the All-seeing Eye of God can pierce into the inmost Recesses of the Mind; therefore every Thought and Imagination of the Heart must be cognizable by His Laws.

Moreover all Human Power is deriv'd from God; Man hath nought, but what he borrows from his Maker; He circumscribed his Being, and measured out to him his Portion of self Defence; under His Banners he acteth, and is accountable to Him, should he exceed His Commission: The greatest Monarchs and Potentates are subject to His high Jurisdiction, bound to adore the awful Majesty of Heaven, and pay their Homage to the King of Kings: what Authority soever then is lodged in His Servants, must be more fully, and substantially in Him, Who is the true and only Source of Power.

But the most material Difference to my present Purpose is, that Human Magistrates can never judge, whether the Lives of any Subjects are, or will be prejudicial to their Community, save only from past, or present Misdemeanours; and as their Power is limited to this World, no Emolument will accrue to the Publick, from the Death of an innocent Person; neither can they make any Reparation to the Sufferer. Death therefore in this View signifies a perpetual Exclusion, or Extirpation from their Society; and must be consider'd in a penal Sense, as a Deprivation of all the Advantages of Life, and as the capital Punishment of a Malefactor.

But the Almighty Sovereign of Heaven and

Earth may for many other Reasons judge it expedient to take away Life.

As He at one View takes in the past, present, and the future; He can descry the Seeds of Iniquity, ere Time shall have conceiv'd, and brought them forth.

As He can amply recompence the Loss of this World's Goods; the Manifestation of His Glory, or the Illustration of our Obedience may be just Motives to take away Life.

As His Power is over both Worlds; He, in His Universal Providence, may judge it necessary to call His Subjects from different Parts of His Empire, and transfer them from one Province to another; and in his General Superintendency may promote his Welfare, whom He translates.

Or by taking His Servant up into Heaven, as St. Paul was, He may there Sanctifie him for His *Chosen Vessel*; and ordain him His Minister, to return to this World, and deliver His Will to Mankind.

Death therefore, as an Act of Temporal Govenours, is the greatest and last Punishment; but as the Act of the Deity, must be consider'd only as a Passage from one Part of His Dominions to another: and we must look upon him, who is thus translated, still as a Member of GOD's Family, under His Care and Protection; that He has taken him from among Men, either for his Correction, or Advancement, or for the more immediate Furtherance of some Publick Good.

Since then God in His Administration of the Uni-

Universe, may see it necessary to take away Life, for many other Reasons besides actual Transgressions; and as it was before shown, that the Authority of a Temporal Magistrate, where the general Welfare is concern'd, extends it self to the Parent: it will follow, *à fortiori*, that it is consistent with the Power of the Deity to commission whomsoever He pleases in the like Case.

Now as the Almighty, for ought *Abraham* could judge, might foresee that *Isaac*, from a wrong Turn of Education, or a voluntary Depravity, if not corrected by this Means, would frustrate the Purpose of His Providence; or might see it necessary to manifest his own Power; or set *Isaac's* Submission for an Example to future Generations; or might have Occasion for him in the other World, there to fulfil His Will, or to return to this, to assure Men of a Resurrection, and open to them a Scene beyond the Grave: as the Death of *Isaac* would have been subservient to these Ends, God could depute any of His Servants to prosecute the Means for the Attainment of these Ends. The Authority of a human Magistrate, in delegating one Member to take away the Life of another for capital Crimes, is derived from the Relation and Concernment those Crimes bear to the Common Weal: now as in many other Instances unknown to human Magistrates, some publick Good may be equally affected; the plain and necessary Consequence is, that God hath at least the same Power to Commission any Man to take away the Life of that Person, which thus concerns it:

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hence I infer the Possibility of this Command from the Deity. It matters not whether any one of these were the real Case of *Isaac*; 'tis sufficient to my present Purpose, that 'twas possible it might be; for then *Abraham* might be satisfied that this Command was consistent with the Divine Power. Exceedingly cautious therefore we ought to be, how we presume to limit Divine Authority, from reasoning upon our own, and to prescribe Bounds to the Almighty, and say, hitherto may He go, and no farther.

This great Difficulty being obviated, and this Stumbling Block remov'd; it remains to show, that since the Power of the Deity in this Case is over every Creature in general, there might be Peculiar Motives for His Orders to *Abraham* in particular.

As the Relation of Father to Son is no Abridgment of the Divine Power over the Father; there appears no Absurdity in supposing there might be Reasons, why God should lay His Commands upon the Father; if so, there is no general Proof against all; and it is next to an Impossibility for Man to comprehend, and refute every particular one, that may be advanc'd for it; which he undertakes, who pronounces it morally unfit: it seems therefore more rational to acquiesce in the Possibility of there being some Reason for it, than to deny what is morally impossible for us to prove.

'Tis not sufficient to proceed upon a Supposition of there being no Reasons for this Command, or to urge a seeming Improbability against

against it; nothing less than an Absolute and Perfect Knowledge of its Impossibility can be any Warrant to reject it: for without this Knowledge, there may be Reasons with GOD of which we may be wholly unacquainted: here Resistance in Fact denies that to be known by the Deity, which is unknown to Man; whilst Submission is a just Acknowledgement of the Difference between finite Understandings and infinite Wisdom: for to judge of a Revelation from the subject Matter of it, and to prove from thence that it cannot come from God, 'tis necessary to shew, that 'tis either absurd in its own Nature, or inconsistent with the Divine Attributes: but if this cannot be fully and clearly made out, there is left a Possibility of its being Divine, and therefore it is not to be rejected on this Account: for what may be, is for ought we know at present come to pass; and the external Evidences for the Divinity of a Revelation may over-balance a bare Improbability against it. Hence in the Case before us, as there is no Absurdity in supposing that there may be Reasons, why God should command the Father to sacrifice his Son; there is a Possibility for His commanding him; and consequently it cannot be condemn'd, or pronounc'd morally unfit from the subject Matter of it.

Nay as the Command to take away the Life of *Isaac* might be for his Good; 'tis difficult, if not impossible to conceive, how it can be proved that there could be no Reason for sending this Command to *Abraham*.

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But for a farther Confirmation of this Point I urge, That the Almighty might see, either that Mankind did, or would dispute this Part of his Divine Prerogative; and therefore might judge it necessary to vindicate his Authority over the Father. Or it might be expedient to exemplify the Father's Obedience, or Son's Submission, for their Improvement, or that of Posterity. These I conceive, for ought any One can prove to the contrary, may be sufficient Reasons to determine the Deity in this Case. From all which I conclude that God hath Power, and may have Reason to make the Father his Instrument to take away the Life of the Son.

Should it be asked why did not God submit His Reasons to *Abraham*, why He required this at his Hands, to satisfie him in so doubtful a Case, that it was His Command? I answer, that there was no Occasion for it; because he had a satisfactory Proof of its Divinity from the Nature and Circumstances of the Revelation, as I shall shew under my next Head; and then every other Confirmation would have been superfluous, and also proved a Diminution of his Faith and Obedience.

Besides, had this been done, God's Purpose had been frustrated: 'tis evident from Scripture that one chief End in this Command was to set before Mankind an Example of the Patriarchs Faith: had God inform'd him, that He would prevent him from Offering up his Son, 'tis plain He had also prevented His own Purpose: or had He reserved this from him, and revealed only his

his Design of delivering down his Faith to future Generations; yet then His Virtue would have appear'd stained to us; when the Desire of Glory, and Ostentation might, for what we could judge, have adulterated his Principles of Obedience: thus it would have proved to us an Abatement of the Merit of his Faith, and consequently there had been in some Measure a Failing in the Main, and Principal End.

It may not be here improper to remark, that there are many Things, which when practiced merely from the Impulse of our own Will, are morally evil; but when attended with the Circumstance of a Divine Command, are morally good: if this wanted Illustration, I might instance in *Samuel's* anointing *David* King over *Israel*; had his Will been his sole Director, this Action would have been deem'd illegal; but when 'twas wrought in Obedience to a Divine Command, it was evidently just, and proper. Had St. *Peter* of himself attempted to walk upon the Sea, it might have been judg'd a desperate, and rash Enterprize; but when 'twas commanded by his Lord and Saviour, it then became not only Lawful, but his Duty. When therefore any Command is delivered by an invisible *Hand*; should that Command be in its Nature absurd, or directly contrary to the plain Evidence of Sense and Reason; we may indeed from thence judge, that it cannot come from God: but when the subject Matter is in the Power of the Deity, but without His Order would be unlawful; since 'tis above the Reach of Human

man Comprehension to judge of the Times when, or the Person, to whom, it will be proper for God to send His Commands; the most natural, and perhaps the only Means of judging from whom these come, are from the Evidences of the Revelation: and we may reasonably suppose, that God always gives such Signs of Himself, that either from a Comparison of this with preceding Revelations; or by general establish'd *Criterions*; or by some other special Circumstances; it is placed in our Power to distinguish, whether such Commands are from Him, or not. When *Abraham* receiv'd from Above an Express to sacrifice his Son; so soon as he had convinc'd himself in general of the Possibility of this Command from the Deity; as he must be sensible it was beyond his Power to find out what Particular Reasons there might be within the secret Counsels of the Almighty, or why they were reserv'd from him; the only Means to gain farther Satisfaction in this Matter, was to apply himself to the external Evidences of this Revelation; and if these concur'd to testifie its Divinity, he had then a sufficient Proof from whom it came, and of his Duty of Submission to it.

And this brings me in the third Place, to shew that, as far as we can judge from the Inspir'd History, *Abraham* had all reasonable Assurance that the Command to offer up his Son was Divine.

God had aforetime frequently Reveal'd Himself to him. The first Instance, that is mention'd in Holy-Writ, is, that the Lord had spoke to

to him in *Urr of Chaldea*, to go forth from his Kindred, and from his Father's House, unto a Land, that He would shew him; and that He would make a great Nation of him, and that in him all Families of the Earth should be blessed. Gen. XII. 1, 2, 3.

When *Abraham* had passed through the Land of *Canaan*, and came to *Sichem* in the Plain of *Moreb*; the Lord appear'd unto him a second Time, and said, unto thy Seed will I give this Land. Gen. XII. 7.

After *Abraham* and *Lot* had parted from each other, and *Lot* had chosen the fertile Plain of *Jordan*, whilst *Abraham* remain'd in the midst of the Land of *Canaan*; God enlarg'd His Promise, and said; *All the Land that thou seeft, to thee will I give it, and to thy Seed for ever; and I will make thy Seed, as the Dust of the Earth, that if a Man can number the Dust of the Earth, then shall thy Seed also be numbred.* Gen. XIII. 15, 16.

Again the Word of the Lord came to *Abraham* to certify him, that his Servant should not be his Heir, but he, that should come forth out of his own Bowels, should be his Heir; and his Seed should be as the Stars of Heaven. At this Time a Sign was given him that he should inherit the Land of *Canaan*. Gen. XV.

When *Abraham* was ninety and nine Years of Age; the Lord appear'd unto him, and instituted the Covenant of Circumcision, to be observ'd by him, and his Generations after him: He told him also, that His Covenant should be establish'd with *Isaac*, whom *Sarab* should bear unto him, at the set Time in the next Year. Gen. XVII.

When *Abraham* was in the Plains of *Mamre*, he entertain'd three Angels, who came to strengthen his Faith, and prevent all Diffidence in him, or his Wife; they assured them, that nothing was too hard for the Lord, but *at the Time appointed*, *He would return unto them according to the Time of Life*, and *Sarah should have a Son*. In the close of this Day, was God's Conference with *Abraham*, and *Abraham's Intercession for the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah*. Gen. XVIII.

After this, when *Sarah* had conceiv'd, and bore a Son to him in his old Age, at the set Time, which God had spoken unto him; she importun'd him to cast out *Hagar*, and her Son *Ishmael*, and not to suffer him to be Coheir with *Isaac*: *Abraham* being much troubled within himself, and in great Suspence what Course to take, *The Lord said unto him, let it not be grievous in thy Sight because of the Lad, and because of thy Bond-woman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her Voice; for in Isaac shall thy Seed be called*. Gen. XXI. 12.

These seven Times 'tis recorded that God reveal'd Himself to *Abraham*, before He commanded him to sacrifice his Son: 'tis not told us in what particular Manner God did reveal Himself to him; but however that was, from his frequent Experience of Divine Revelations, 'tis reasonable to conclude, that he was acquainted with their Characteristicks; and therefore must be capable of distinguishing an Authentick Mission. But we have a much stronger Proof than this: The Completion of several Things there

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predicted was a Demonstration, that they came from God.

When *Abraham* left his native Country, and his Father's House, Providence made ample Provision for him, and enrich'd him with all the Blessings of Life; He in part possess'd the Land of *Canaan* according to the Word of the Lord; He had seen the Promise of a Son miraculously fulfill'd in the Birth of *Isaac*, when he was an hundred Years of Age, and *Sarah* his Wife above ninety; The Judgments upon *Sodom*, and *Go-morrah* came to pass, as they were foretold him; wonderful was his Victory, with only the Servants of his own Household, over the Four Kings, who had taken Prisoner *Lot*, his Brother's Son; that he was the peculiar Care of Providence, was observed by *Abimeleck* King of *Gerar*, and *Melchisedeck* King of *Salem*: All which place it beyond Dispute, that the Hand of the Lord was with him, and that these Revelations came from the most High.

In the same brief Manner with the former, is this Command to offer up *Isaac* related to us: 'Tis said, *That it came to pass after these Things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, behold here am I. And He said, take now thy Son, thine only Son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the Land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt Offering upon one of the Mountains, that I shall tell thee of.* Gen. XXII. 12.

As there is no Mention made of any Difference in the Evidences of this with the Preceding Revelations; every candid and sincere Enquirer

quierer must conclude that This was communicated to him in the same Manner: and then as he had a moral Certainty, from whom They came; it follows, that he had the same Certainty for the Divinity of this Command; and since this Injunction might, for ought any Man could judge, be the Will of the Deity: I infer, that the concurring Circumstances of this with the foregoing Revelations, would justify *Abraham's* Conduct in the Sight of God, and recommend his Obedience to Mankind. From all which it appears, that as far as we can judge from the inspired History, he had all reasonable Assurance, that the Command to offer up his Son was Divine.

The first Observation, I shall make from this Discourse, is, That the great Excellency of *Abraham's* Faith consisted in a fixed and steadfast Perswasion of God's Power and Justice to raise his Son from the Dead.

The State of Mankind in the Patriarchs Days was far different from the present; Revelation hath discover'd to us the Resurrection of the Body; its Doctrine hath been fully canvass'd, and universally receiv'd; but 'twas not so in the days of *Abraham*, the Resurrection of the Body had then probably never entered into the Heart of Man.

The Arbitrary Power of a Parent over the Lives of his Children hath been long since exploded, and condemn'd; but in those early Ages, the Masters of Family's in *Chaldea*, *Canaan*, and *Egypt* exercised this Power over their Sons; and this

this was countenanc'd by their Civil Institutions: I mention not this, as if Custom gave any Sanction to this Practice; and *Abraham*, who was renown'd for his Wisdom through the *East*, must know that this Authority was usurp'd, and that the Laws of his Country tolerated what Nature, and Reason protested against; but this naturally led him to reflect upon the Difference between Human and Divine Authority; where he must soon perceive that God was our Father, and our Governour, in a much more exalted Sense than Man could be; and that Deference, which is due to the general Opinion of Mankind, no doubt admonish'd him to be cautious, how he receded too far from their Judgments, and denied that to God, which was claim'd by his Brethren: being neither driven by popular Applause, nor carried away with an impetuous Torrent of Contradiction, but an ingenuous Desire of Truth being his Pilot, he steer'd between those Extremes, and safely arriv'd at the Knowledge of his Duty. The Consideration of Infinite Power, and the careful Correction of the common Errour of his Country-men naturally prevail'd with him to allow that to his Creator, which he could not to his Fellow Creatures; so that Obstacle probably was soon Remov'd. But the greatest Difficulty seems to turn upon the Reconciliation of the Death of *Isaac* with a foregoing Promise, that *in him his Seed should be called*: Here of himself he must have started the Thought of a Resurrection of the Dead, examin'd its Possibility, and after all this, must have relied upon God's

God's Justice to do that, which he had only found was possible to reconcile them : his Faith therefore appears most eminent from his diligent Researches for Means to satisfy himself, how this Promise might be made consistent with this Command, and in His arguing himself into a deep Sense of God's infinite Veracity, and a stedfast Perswasion of His performing, what He had promised.

We may suppose him thus Reasoning with himself.

Though Mankind may falsely claim a Power over the Lives of their Children ; yet He, who is the Creator, and Governour of the Universe, must be invested with it ; and as He is in the strictest Sense our Father, 'tis evident there is no Inconsistency arising from this Relation, and therefore the Natural Father may be substituted by Providence to execute His Will upon the Son. But how can this Command be reconciled with His Word, by which He promised me, that from *Isaac* He would raise a Great and Mighty Nation ? if this clashes with His Justice, This single Proof against it must far out-weigh all its external Evidences : if my Son now dies, he leaves no Issue ; and can he return from the Grave ? that a Body be reunited to the Soul, and restored to the Land of the Living requires a Power beyond Thought. But hold ! Though *Isaac* cannot do this for himself, cannot God do it for him ? in the Structure of this World, He hath exemplified Power greater than what we can comprehend ; He who hath controul'd the common

mon Laws of Nature, and given me a Son at these Years, can again controul those Laws, and breath in his Nostrils the Breath of Life: This then is not impossible with God; 'tis plain He can do it; but still Another Doubt breaks in upon me, how know I that He will do it? not the least Hint hath he given me of this; *Offer up thy Son, thy Only Son Isaac, whom thou lovest*, was His strict Command, without any subsequent Reserve, without one Word of restoring him to Life: why did He aggravate His heavy Charge with that bitter Sentence, *Thy only Son Isaac whom thou lovest*? those Words pierc'd my Heart, I feel the Power of Nature within me, and its Link drawing me to disobey it: How unlike is this to His former Revelations? with what wonderful Condescension and Complacency was He wont to converse with me? Have I disoblig'd Him, that He should now so sternly frown upon me? doth He see that I shall? but then, why did He not see it sooner? or doth He mean to try my Obedience, and Duty to Him? But how hard is this Trial! to what sad Extremity am I reduced, either to lose my Son, or part with my Integrity! Oh! might I die in his stead! would God accept of my Life for his, how chearfully would I resign it! how readily should these Hands pay down this Ransom for him! But alafs! This is not permitted! I must offer up my Son, or an Ungrateful Mind; Ungrateful to Him, Who never fail'd in His Goodness to me: He out of His pure good Will singled me out from the whole Race of Mankind, for the

peculiar Object of His Favour; when destitute of all other Means, His Providence was my Guide; upheld by His Right Hand, have I been crown'd with the choicest of His Blessings; and shall I respect the Gifts, more than the Giver, and wrest these Motives of Obedience to the Means of Ingratitude? Can I thus reproach my Maker, and upbraid Him for His abundant Mercy towards me? Is this the Pledge of my Obedience? Is this the Recompence of a Generous Mind? He deserves no such Returns; and far be such Returns from me; Faithful have I found him, on his *Promise* therefore will I *rest*, This shall be the *Anchor* of my Soul: One Way have I discover'd, how His *Promise* may be reconciled with this Command; possibly there may be more; but by This am I satisfied that there is no Repugnancy between them: tis enough for me to know that His Justice can, and will find means, in what Manner concerns me not; all farther Revelation would have argued the Weakness of my Faith; my ready Submission therefore to His Will shall vindicate the Justness of His Proceedings, and in my Obedience will I declare that His *Word* is sufficient for me. As for *Isaac*, That Goodness, which in such a wonderful Manner call'd him forth into Being, hath some great End to serve in this Command; some high important Message may be deliver'd to him in the other World, for the Benefit of that Nation, which is to spring from his Loyns; this it may be; some Good no doubt it will be, for 'tis the Lord that gave, and that taketh away

away, and blessed be the Name of the L O R D.

With some such like Reflections as these, we may suppose *Abraham* pass'd that Part of three Days, from his receiving this Command, to his Arrival at the Mountain, where he was to offer up his Son. From a solemn Contemplation of G o d's Attributes, he suppress'd the Tumult of his Passions, and silenc'd their Importunities, to listen to the Advice of his Understanding, which wrought in him a true Conviction of Infinite Justice: He, as St. *Paul* elegantly expresseth it, *against Hope* from all natural Things, or from any Concurrence in secondary Causes, *believed in Hope* of G o d's Almighty Power; and therefore the Apostle very justly ascribeth the great Virtue of his Faith to his *Accounting*, or Reasoning, that *GOD was able to raise up Isaac from the Dead, from Whom he had receiv'd him in a Figure.*

Another Use that I shall make of this Discourse is a Vindication of that Command, which was deliver'd by *Moses*, to the Children of *Israel*, to destroy the Inhabitants of the Land of *Canaan*.

As G o d might have just Reasons to extirpate that People by the *Israelites*; and as they had unquestionable Credentials of his Commission who delivered to them this Command; it becomes a Parallel Case with this of *Abraham's*, and therefore their Submission to it was likewise very just and reasonable.

'Tis told us in Scripture, that in the Days of *Abraham*, G o d forbore to root out the *Amorites* from the Land of *Canaan*, because their Sins were not yet full; from which we may gather, that their

Fulness determin'd Him to destroy them: And if an Earthly Prince can authorize his Subjects to cut off those Enemies, that annoy his Territories; how much more can He, who is the Almighty Sovereign of Heaven and Earth, send forth His Armies against those, who are Rebels to His Laws, and conspire against His Government? To raise in the *Israélites* an Abhorrence of the gross Idolatrys of the Heathen, to extirpate those Abominations together with their Followers, to shew to His People His Indignation against Sin, and prevent them from being the Objects of His Wrath might be just Reasons, why He appointed them to be the Executioners of it: since all we find was little enough to guard them from the Infection of Sin, and from leaving His Righteous Altar, to adore the Gods they had vanquish'd.

If then there were sufficient Testimonies to convince them that this Command came from God, they had a satisfactory Proof of their Obligation to comply with it; and that they had such Testimonies is evident from their Deliverance from the *Egyptian* Bondage. God work'd many Signs and Wonders by His Servant *Moses*; by him He bow'd the stubborn Heart of *Pharoah*, and compell'd him to let *Israel* go out of his Land; by him He made the Sea dry Land for their Passage, and turn'd it's Waves against their Pursuers; by him He delivered to them their Religious and Civil Rites, ordain'd them Laws, Judgments, and Statutes; by him He fed them with the Bread of Heaven, made Water spring from

from the stony Rocks, and gave many other infallible Proofs, that *Moses* was His faithful Minister. Now by him did *God* send them His Command, that *they should utterly destroy the seven Nations that dwelt in the Land of Canaan, that they should make no Covenant with them, nor shew Mercy unto them.* Deut. VII. 2. Every preceding Miracle by the Hand of *Moses*, as it shew'd his Intercourse with the Almighty, and his Faithfulness such as *God* could trust, must testify his Integrity to the *Israelites*, and recommend him to their Confidence likewise. The same Arguments therefore, which justify *Abraham's* Obedience in the Sacrifice of his Son, justify Submission to this Command, and vindicate the Divine Justice in punishing the Children of *Israel* for their partial Compliance with it.

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Remarks

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## REMARKS upon Mr. CHUBB'S *Case of Abraham.*

MR. Chubb in his Treatise upon the Case of *Abraham* lays down this Supposition (either as what hath been already proved, or as a self evident Truth) That there was no Circumstance that could render it fit that *Isaac* should die; and consequently it must be right and proper, that *Abraham* should guard and secure that Life, which he had been the Means of introducing. As I have already considered this Proposition, and shewn there might be Circumstances, which might render it proper that *Isaac's* Life should be taken from him; it will be necessary only to examine what He hath advanced in his former Tracts to support this Supposition, and shew that it stands in his Case of *Abraham* without any Proof, and that his whole Treatise rests entirely upon it. The only Part, that I can find, which hath the least Shadow of an Argument for it, is in his *Supplement to his Previous Question.* p. 227. His Words are these. "As to the Case "of *Abraham*, I think with Submission, That "the Thing commanded was in it self morally un- "fit: And that GOD gave the Command not with  
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“an Intent, that it should be obey’d; But that  
 “He might take an Occasion from it to shew to  
 “*Abraham*, and to all his Posterity, the Unfit-  
 “ness of all human Sacrifices. And that this was  
 “the Case is, I think, evident from the Event;  
 “for as the Command was given to *Abraham*,  
 “to be a Tryal of his Integrity, so when that  
 “End was answer’d, and *Abraham* had shewn a  
 “steady Resolution, that he would deny him-  
 “self in so signal an Instance, rather than neg-  
 “lect to do what he judged to be his Duty, then  
 “GOD recall’d the Command, and thereby testi-  
 “fied His Dislike, and shew’d the Unfitness of all  
 “such Practices.”

Here it is imagined to be evident from the Event,

I. That the Thing Commanded was in it self morally unfit.

II. That GOD took hence an Occasion to shew to *Abraham*, and all his Posterity, the Unfitness of all human Sacrifices.

In this Passage likewise ’tis imply’d, That GOD can give a Command, when the Thing commanded is morally unfit.

I must beg leave to remark; That a Thing may be unfit to be the Subject of a Command in its own Nature.

Or It may be unfit to be commanded in some Circumstances or Seasons.

Or It may be commanded, and there may be Circumstances, wherein it may be improper to suffer it to be executed. The

The First is absolute, the Others Relative: What is in its Nature morally unfit, is at all Times equally the same, and cannot be supposed to be the Subject even of infinite Power and Justice.

What are Relatively unfit, are only so at particular Seasons; and therefore in those Seasons will be improper, when at others they may be proper.

If Mr. *Chubb* means that the Thing commanded *Abraham* was morally unfit in the last Sense, (*viz.*) that 'twas not convenient it should be permitted to be executed, this indeed is evident from the Event; because we may reasonably suppose, that if it had been convenient, it would not have been prevented: but then This makes nothing for his Supposition in his *Case of Abraham*; for this is Arguing rather from the Accidents, than the Substance of the Command; and implies that there may arise Circumstances, wherein it may be expedient, as well as those, wherein it may be inexpedient: whereas Mr. *Chubb* supposes that there could not be any Circumstance which could render it proper, that *Abraham* should take away the Life of *Isaac*: And it is an impossible Supposition to make that to be commanded by the Deity, which cannot possibly be proper to be obeyed.

If Mr. *Chubb* means that the Thing commanded was in its Nature morally unfit; and this seems to be his Meaning, by considering the Thing commanded *in it self*, abstracted from its Circumstances; and by inferring from it, the

Unlawfulness of all human Sacrifices, and also from the *preceding Passage*; then it will by no means follow, that this Unfitness is evident from the Event: Nay farther, The Giving of a Command proves the Thing Commanded to be in its Nature morally fit; for He, who enjoyns any Thing, claims an Authority, as well over the Thing, as the Person enjoyn'd: to suppose therefore the Subject of a Divine Command to be morally evil, is making GOD usurp Power, and, in Mr. *Woolaston's* Style, is charging Him with a Falsity, and representing Him asserting that to be His, which is not: Whilst the Recalling a Command may be owing to Circumstances, which may occur before the Time assigned for its Execution. Should a King send his Orders to his General to march at an appointed Time against his Enemies; in the mean while should these make their Overtures for Peace, on Terms of Restitution for Injuries offered, and the King should recall his Orders; it is evident that the Thing commanded was not in its Nature morally unfit, and that intermediate Circumstances gave Occasion for countering the General.

If it be objected that such a Conduct in Men may be very prudent, and justifiable, because intervening Accidents, which they cannot possibly foresee, may be a just Reason for changing their Measures; But an Infinite Being, Who foresees all Events, cannot be supposed to give any Command, which there shall be Occasion afterwards to recall: I answer that this is not always the Case; Reasons for recalling a Command

mand sometimes arise from the natural Consequences of giving it; and there is frequently a great Difference between the entire Absence of a Command, and the giving and recalling it: for Instance, God sent His Prophet *Jonah* to acquaint the *Ninevites*, that within forty Days their City should be destroyed: this Message brought them to Prayer, and Fasting, and a sincere Contrition for their Sins; by which the Anger of the L O R D was averted, and He recalled His Command: now had there been no Command, the *Ninevites* probably had not repented; for this seem'd purely the Effect of *Jonah's* Message, and was what prevented its Execution.

In like Manner, as God's chief Purpose, in appointing *Abraham* to offer up his Son, was to set before us an Example of his Faith; and as *Abraham's* Intention was clearly discover'd, and the End Answered before the actual Sacrifice of *Isaac*; there was then no Occasion for it, and this might be a sufficient Reason for God's preventing it; from which 'tis evident that it cannot be inferr'd, that the Thing commanded was in its Nature morally unfit, from its being recall'd; but what may be fit and necessary to be commanded at one Time, may be as fit and necessary to be recalled at another.

The Other Inference, which Mr. *Chubb* supposes to be evident from the Event is, that God thereby took an Occasion to shew to *Abraham*, and to all his Posterity, the Unfitness of all human Sacrifices. And this is as inconclusive as the former: very remarkable are the Words, which God

spoke to *Abraham*, when He called to him out of Heaven, as he was about to offer up his Son: *Lay not, says He, thy Hand upon the Lad, neither do thou any Thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest G O D, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me:* And again; *By My Self have I sworn, saith the L O R D, because thou hast done this Thing and hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son: that in Blessing I will bless thee, and in Multiplying, I will multiply thy Seed, as the Stars of the Heaven; and as the Sand that is upon the Seashore, and thy Seed shall possess the Gate of his Enemies, and in thy Seed shall all Nations of the Earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My Voice.*

Gen. XXII. 12, 16, 17, 18.

Here is declared the highest Approbation of *Abraham's* Obedience, and a free Acceptance of his Intention; but not any Intimation that what he intended was ill, nor the least Rebuke for the Incorrectness of his Judgment: How then could any Occasion be taken from hence to shew the Unfitness of human Sacrifices, when the greatest Blessings are promised for the Attempt of such a Sacrifice, and where the Attempt is esteem'd as the Act? for the Expression is, *because thou hast done this Thing:* and in this Sense is St. James to be understood, when he saith; *was not Abraham our Father justified by Works, when he had offer'd Isaac his Son upon the Altar?* James II. 21.

Had there been any Design to shew the Unfitness of the Action, is it not probable that some Reprehension of *Abraham's* Error in not discovering its Unfitness, would here have been

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declared to him? but since the Act and the Intention in this Case are the same; what Praises are bestow'd upon This, must extend to the Other: though *the Bible*, as Mr. *Chubb* observes, *may make no Mention of the Goodness of Abraham's Judgment, or the Justness of his Reasoning; or whether Abraham had, or had not any rational Satisfaction that the Command was divine, or the Action fit or unfit*; yet as his Intention and Faith were the Offspring of his Judgment, and his Reasoning, the Commendation of the former suppose the Goodness and Justness of the latter; and 'tis the same which soever are mention'd, since what is said of Either is equally applicable to Both: neither can I think that 'tis any high strain'd Complement to Christianity, or a too indulgent Concession to the Sacred Writings, to suppose those Persons, who are there eminently applauded, and of whose Judgments there is an entire Silence, to act from just and rational Principles: therefore the most natural Conclusion is, that as **GOD** commanded *Abraham* to offer up his Son, and rewarded his Obedience with such extraordinary Favours, He took from thence an Occasion to shew to him and his Posterity the Fitness of all such Sacrifices, when He Himself requir'd them.

At the End of this Case of *Abraham*, Mr. *Chubb* adds another Inference as wide as the foregoing.

"I here add, says he, that the Command might  
"be given in Order to convince *Abraham*, that even  
"his Honesty and Integrity, when not under the  
"Direction of his Understanding, might mislead  
him

“him in the Conducting of his Actions, of which,  
“to Appearance at least, this was an Instance.

To give the highest Commendation for his Intention, and the greatest Promises for his Obedience is a very odd Way of convincing him that his Intention was ill grounded; and it seems to derogate from Infinite Wisdom so highly to applaud and recommend to the World an Act of Obedience, which flow'd from Ignorance and Weakness of Judgment; since the greatest Part of Mankind could never distinguish between good, and evil Principles thus blended together: and as there might be other Ends in recalling this Command (which Mr. *Chubb*, before he had been so fruitful in his Consequences, should have prov'd that 'twas impossible there should be) if GOD had purposed to reprehend his Errour, it seems absolutely necessary to have specified This to him. When we are assured that GOD gives us a Command, it seems to be above the ordinary Pitch of human Understanding to discover the Unfitness of Obedience; if therefore the Weakness, or Neglect of our Judgment is in this Case to be reprehended, it seems necessary, that we should in a very express and particular Manner be inform'd of our Mistake, and plainly taught by what means we might correct it for the future: if indeed an Errour be so obvious, as at first Sight to be easily discover'd, a small Hint may turn us to perceive it; but when the Mind is not strong enough to discern the Fault, there some extraordinary Pains must be taken to clear our Understanding, and lay it

it open to our View. Since then there was no plain Rebuke given to *Abraham* for any Remissness in his Judgment, but on the contrary the greatest Commendation for his Readiness to perform what *God* required from him, what could he conclude, but that there were other Reasons for *God's* recalling this Command?

If *Abraham* was able to discover its moral Unfitness, as Mr. *Chubb* supposes, by infering that *God* design'd to convince him, that his Honesty and Integrity, when not under the Direction of his Understanding, might mislead him; then as he might have inform'd himself that this ought not to be obey'd, his whole Conduct in this Affair becomes criminal; and his Honesty and Integrity, on which he lays the Stress of his Virtue, dwindles into a blind Zeal, and an enthusiastick Superstition.

Mr. *Chubb* in his Supplement to his Previous Question p. 228. asserts; "if *Abraham* had sacrificed his Son in Obedience to the Divine Command (which, as I observ'd above, *God* never intended he should, but on the contrary, by shewing His dislike of all such Practices) In such a Case, though the Simplicity, Honesty, and Integrity of *Abraham* would have been commendable, yet the Action it self would have been abominable, both in the Eyes of *God*, and Man; as it was an Instance of Cruelty, for a Father to imbrue his Hands in the Blood of his Son, when that Son had not done any Thing which made him forfeit his Title to his Father's Protection, much less to forfeit his Life; "and

“and as it bespoke the Being, to whom the sa-  
“crifice was offer’d, to be of an evil Disposition;  
“because the Action supposes that He either de-  
“lighted in, or that His Resentment was remov’d  
“by such an Instance of Barbarity.

I cite not this Passage for any Argument that is advanced towards proving, that there could be no Reason why **G O D** should require the Life of *Isaac* by the Hands of *Abraham*, for here He only supposes, that there was none; but for an Instance of his Opinion, that though the Action it self would have been abominable, yet *Abra- ham's* Honesty and Integrity was commendable. And in His Case of *Abraham* p. 245. he speaks to the same Purpose. But 'tis hard to conceive; how *Abraham's* steady Resolution to do what he judged to be his Duty in such a trying Instance, could be any just Ground for such extraordinary Fa- vours, if he had not inform'd his Judgment to the best of his Abilitys: such an Error must cer- tainly cast a Shade upon his Virtue; and I believe Mr. *Chubb* will acknowledge that the Desire of serving **G O D** and Religion is not to be justified, when it vents it self in Massacres and Persecu- tions. Besides in the former Passage, as He insinuates that *Abraham* was corrected for not sub- mitting his Honesty and Integrity to the Direc- tion of his Understanding; He seems to be guilty of this Inconsistency, in making **G O D**, by recalling the Command, to reprove him for not rectifying his Judgment, and at the same Time in an especial Manner to approve of the Result of that Judgment: 'Tis not reasonable to ima- gine

gine that **G O D** should command such a rash and impetuous Forwardness of obeying his Will, which overshoots the Knowledge of it, and hurr ys us from reflecting upon the proper Measures of Obedience ; and I dare affirm that from this his State of *Abraham's Case*, He may vindicate all the Inquisitions, Racks, and Tortures, that have ever been practiced for God and Religion's Sake ; and there is so manifest a Contradiction between a Command of **G O D**, and its being morally unfit ; that I can't but think that if the latter be supposed ( what ever may be Mr. *Chubb's* Meaning ) the natural Consequence would be, that the Whole was a Delusion upon *Abraham*.

Thus have I examin'd all that is necessary to be premiz'd in Relation to His *Case of Abraham* ; for the only Shew of an Argument, that Mr. *Chubb* hath offer'd to produce for proving this Command to be morally unfit, is this of the Event, in his *Supplement to his Previous Question* ; how dissonant to Truth that is, I hope I have sufficiently shewn.

In His *Case of Abraham* He begins with begg ing the Question, and takes it for granted, That there could be no possible Circumstance, that could render it fit or reasonable for **G O D** to require *Isaac's* Life, by the Hands of *Abraham* ; the contrary of this I have prov'd in the foregoing Discourse, and therefore shall only farther shew in Answer to his *Case*, that this is his Supposition, and Whoever is appriz'd of it, will readily see, that the ensuing Part is only a Consequence from it.

“ *Abraham*, says he, stood to *Isaac* in the Relation of a Father, that is, He voluntarily became

"the Instrument of bringing *Isaac* into Being,  
 "and from hence He became naturally oblig'd to  
 "guard and protect that Life, which He had by  
 "a voluntary Act been the Instrument of intro-  
 "ducing: for as Life to *Isaac* was a natural Good,  
 "so it must be right and fit, that every Person, but  
 "more especially He, Who introduced it, should  
 "guard and secure that Good to him; Provided,  
 "*Isaac* did nothing to forfeit his Title to Life,  
 "and consequently his Title to that Protection,  
 "and whilst no Circumstance attended his Case,  
 "which might render his Life injurious to the  
 "common Happiness, or any other Way render  
 "it fit that he should die.

This, says he, I take to be a self evident Propo-  
 sition; and this I readily allow to be so; but  
 then I must beg Leave to deny that this was *Isaac's* Case; neither doth it by any means appear that  
 it was absolutely impossible that there could be  
 Circumstances, which might render it fit that  
*Isaac* should die; however this is Mr. *Chubb's* Sup-  
 position, and let it be remarked, that he describes  
 the Obligation of a Father to protect the Life  
 of his Son, in a limited Sense, *viz.* when there is  
 no Reason that he should die; when therefore he  
 repeats this Obligation, 'tis to be understood in  
 this Sense; and this Caution is the more necessa-  
 ry, because a superficial or inattentive Reader  
 will be apt to take this Obligation, when it stands  
 by it self, as it sometimes doth, in a general  
 Sense, when it hath only a particular One; for  
 which Reason I shall add this Condition to it,  
 where it occurs in those few Passages that I shall  
 quote from him.

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“By natural Obligation, says he, I mean, that  
 “it was right and fit in the Nature of the Thing,  
 “that *Abraham* should guard and protect the Life  
 “of *Isaac*, as aforesaid; which Obligation, as ‘tis  
 “founded in Nature, so ‘tis independent of, and  
 “antecedent to any Divine Command; yea ‘tis  
 “antecedent to the Consideration of a Deity, be-  
 “cause it must and would be the same, if there  
 “was no such Thing as a Deity.

Here ‘tis manifest that he opposes the Divine Command to this Obligation in a limited Sense, which is carrying on that supposition. He proceeds,

“Now if this be the Case, then I think it will  
 “unavoidably follow, that no subsequent Divine  
 “Command can possibly cancel, or take off the  
 “aforesaid natural Obligation, it being a mani-  
 “fest Absurdity and Contradiction in Terms, to  
 “say that a Natural Obligation arises from, or  
 “is destroyed by a Divine Command; for if it de-  
 “pends upon a Divine Command; it is not natu-  
 “ral, in the Sense I here use that Term; and if  
 “the Divine Command could not make void the  
 “natural Obligation, which *Abraham* was under  
 (*to protect his Son’s Life, whilst there was no possible Circumstance that could render it fit that he should die:*) then I think it will follow, that the giving  
 “such a Command with an Intent that it should  
 “be obey’d must be wrong, and consequently  
 “that Obedience to such a Command must be  
 “wrong also, but God did not intend that the  
 “Command given to *Abraham* should be obeyed,  
 “as is evident by his recalling it; this I take to  
 “be the State of the Case.

Tis foreign to my Purpose, else I might here again remark, that Mr. *Chubb* from hence infinates, either that this Command to *Abraham* was not Divine, or else he states an Impossibility, in supposing that God can command, what contradicts a Law of Nature; but 'tis my Business alone, and which will evade both these, to observe that he here all along only supposes, that there could be no Circumstance that could render it fit, that *Isaac* should die: and he, who will take the Pains to examine what follows, cannot but discern that this runs through the whole Treatise, and at the same Time, he will see, that there is not the least Attempt made towards proving it; so that by denying this Supposition, his whole Reasoning is undermined: tis indeed a very concis Method of arguing, to lay that down for a first principle, upon which the Question turns: but however clear this Supposition may appear to Mr. *Chubb*; yet all his subsequent Reasoning is lost to him, who questions the Truth of this Principle; and I must confess, that its contrary seems very reasonable; and I am perswaded, that 'tis demonstrable that God hath Power over the Life of Man at any Age, and may have Reason to exert that Power, and make the Father His Instrument in its Exertion; so that 'till Mr. *Chubb* hath proved a fundamental Article, it is, or at least seems to be, neither *Abraham's*, nor *Isaac's*, but a Case of his own Imagination: and his whole Superstructure is built upon a supposititious Foundation.

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